

Message Text

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ORIGIN NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 R

66011
DRAFTED BY AF:MLGARRISON:WLK
APPROVED BY AF:WESCHAUFELE
S/S:MR. SEBASTIAN

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O 102030Z NOV 76 ZFF4
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USUN NY IMMEDIATE

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NODIS
FOR ARMSTRONG AND SCRANTON ONLY

FOLLOWING REPEAT GENEVA 8925 ACTION SECSTATE 10 NOV QUOTE

S E C R E T GENEVA 8925

NODIS

DEPT PLEASE PASS LONDON

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PFOR RH UK
SUBJECT: RHODESIA CONFERENCE: PROGRESS TOWARDS SETTLING
THE INDEPENDENCE DATE

FOR SCHAUFELE FROM WISNER

1. THE BRITISH MET WITH THE RHODESIANS AND OBSERVER
DELEGATIONS ON NOVEMBER 9 AND ARE MEETING NOVEMBER 10
WITH THE NATIONALISTS. THEY CONTINUE TO BE CAUTIOUSLY
OPTIMISTIC THAT THE DEADLOCK OVER THE INDEPENDENCE
DATE ISSUE WILL BE RESOLVED BY THE END OF THE WEEK.

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2. MEETING WITH THE RHODESIANS: ANTHONY DUFF MET

VAN DER BYL, SQUIRES AND GAYLARD ON NOVEMBER 9 TO SEE IF THE RHODESIAN DELEGATION HAD RECEIVED ANY NEW INSTRUCTIONS FROM SALISBURY. DURING THE COURSE OF THE DISCUSSION THE BRITISH LEARNED THAT THE DELEGATION HAD RECEIVED AND HAVE PROBABLY BEEN SITTING ON AN AMBIGUOUS SET OF INSTRUCTIONS. IN ESSENCE, THE BRITISH HAD ASKED THE RHODESIANS WHETHER THEY WOULD REVERSE THEIR POSITION, ACCEPT 15 MONTHS AS A TARGET DATE ON THE CONDITION THAT THE ELECTORAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES MIGHT TAKE LONGER. THE RHODESIANS SHOWED SOME READINESS TO BE DRAGGED TO THE BRITISH POINT OF VIEW AND GAVE A GENERAL BUT NOT CLEAR EXPRESSION OF AGREEMENT. THE RHODESIANS SUGGESTED SEVERAL ADDITIONAL POINTS, SOME OF WHICH THE BRITISH FOUND ACCEPTABLE; OTHER NOT.

3. THE RHODESIANS RECOMMENDED THAT THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION BEGIN WITH THE INSTALLATION OF THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT AND NOT WITH THE END OF THE CONFERENCE. THEY ARGUED THAT THE CONFERENCE COULD COME TO AN AGREEMENT AND THE OUTCOME BE DENOUNCED BY ONE OR MORE OF THE AFRICAN PARTIES. THE BRITISH COUNTERED BY SAYING THAT IF THIS RISK IS A REAL ONE, IT WOULD NOT BE REDUCED BY CHANGING THE BASE DATE. IF THE RHODESIANS STUCK TO THIS POINT, IT COULD BE SEEN BY THE AFRICANS AS A DEVICE TO PROLONG THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION. THE RHODESIAN REPLY TO THE BRITISH COUNTER-ARGUMENT WAS NOT FORCEFUL LEAVING THE BRITISH WITH THE IMPRESSION THAT VAN DER BYL'S INSTRUCTIONS WERE NOT CATEGORIC.

4. THE RHODESIANS SUGGESTED THAT IF THEY ACCEPTED THE BRITISH FORMULA, THEY WISHED AN ASSURANCE THAT THE CONFERENCE MOVE ON QUICKLY TO DISCUSS FORMATION OF THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT AND NOT BECOME BOGGED DOWN IN SIDE ISSUES. THEY HAD IN MIND THE QUESTION OF THE FRANCHISE. THE BRITISH POLITELY REMINDED VAN DER BYL AND SQUIRES THAT THE LESS SAID ABOUT THE FRANCHISE THE BETTER, AND TOLD THE RHODESIANS THEY WOULD DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO AVOID FURTHER DISCUSSION OF EXTRANEous ISSUES.

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5. THE RHODESIAN DELEGATION THEN MENTIONED SALISBURY'S DESIRE THAT IF A 15 MONTH PERIOD WERE ACCEPTED, THE AFRICANS MUST EXPRESS A WILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT THE REST OF THE PACKAGE, SPECIFICALLY THE THIRD OF THE FIVE POINTS. THE RHODESIANS DID NOT SEEM TO UNDERSTAND THIS INSTRUCTED POINT. VAN DER BYL SAID THAT THE BRITISH SHOULD INTERPRET THE POINT TO MEAN THAT THE KISSINGER

PROGRAM BE ACCEPTED OR "ALL BETS ARE OFF." GAYLARD DISAGREED AND SAID THAT HE INTERPRETED THE INSTRUCTION TO MEAN THAT IF THE CONFERENCE FAILED TO COME UP WITH A MUTUALLY AGREEABLE INTERIM GOVERNMENT PROPOSAL, THE RHODESIAN GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT BE BOUND BY A PRE-SET DATE OF INDEPENDENCE.

6. THE BRITISH REPLIED TO VAN DER BYL SAYING THAT IF HE WERE CORRECT, HIS POSITION WOULD DESTROY ANY PROSPECT OF OBTAINING AFRICAN AGREEMENT FOR AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT. THE REASSURED THE RHODESIANS THAT THEY WOULD WORK TO ACHIEVE ANNEX C OR SOME MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE ALTERNATIVE. IF THE PROPOSAL FOR AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT WAS NOT ACCEPTABLE TO THE RHODESIANS, THEY COULD REJECT IT. THE RHODESIAN DELEGATION, ACCORDING TO THE BRITISH, SEEMED PARTIALLY CONVINCED.

7. MEETING WITH THE OBSERVERS: UPON HIS RETURN FROM LONDON, RICHARD CONVENED THE OBSERVERS TO DISCUSS HOW A COMPROMISE MIGHT BE REACHED. THE OBSERVERS CHARGED THAT THE BRITISH WERE BEHAVING "MONSTROUSLY" IN PRESSING THE NATIONALISTS TO GIVE IN AND WERE NOT PUTTING SUFFICIENT PRESSURE ON SMITH. THE BRITISH REPLIED THAT THEY HAD PUT PRESSURE ON SMITH AND ARMED WITH DUFF'S DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RHODESIANS, SAID THAT THERE WAS "SOME PROSPECT" THAT SMITH MIGHT AGREE TO A 15 MONTH PERIOD. SMITH WOULD ADD CAVEATS AND THE BRITISH WOULD GIVE NO GUARANTEE THEY COULD REACH AN UNDERSTANDING WITH SMITH. THEY PROMISED TO CONTINUE WORKING. THE OBSERVERS REJOINED THAT THEY HAD NO QUARREL WITH SMITH. THE ONLY RELEVANT QUESTION WAS WHAT POSITION THE UNITED KINGDOM TOOK.

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8. THE BRITISH THEN DISCUSSED WITH THE OBSERVERS A VARIETY OF FACE-SAVING FORMULAE WHICH WOULD ENABLE THE NATIONALISTS TO ACCEPT THE 15 MONTH TARGET DATE AND STILL LEAVE OPEN THE POSSIBILITY OF AN EARLIER DATE SHOULD ALL THE ELECTORAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES BE COMPLETED. THE MEETING ENDED WITH NO CONCLUSIVE RESULTS BUT THE BRITISH HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT THE OBSERVERS AND THE NATIONALISTS WERE STRUGGLING TO FIND SOME ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM.

9. RICHARD BEGAN HIS CONSULTATIONS WITH THE NATIONALISTS ON THE MORNING OF NOVEMBER 10. HE WILL MEET THE RHODESIANS AGAIN DURING THE AFTERNOON. REPORTS OF THE FIRST MEETING ARE STILL FRAGMENTARY. SITHOLE TOLD THE PRESS ON LEAVING HIS SESSION WITH RICHARD

THAT NO PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE AND HE STOOD BY 12 MONTHS. IN HIS TYPICALLY DELPHIC MANNER, BISHOP MUZOREWA TOLD THE PRESS THAT "WE ARE STILL WITHIN 48 HOURS" AND THEN REFUSED FURTHER COMMENT. AFTER THEIR JOINT MEETING WITH RICHARD, MUGABE TOLD THE PRESS THAT "WE ARE NOT PREPARED TO POSTPONE A DECISION ON THE DATE ISSUE" WHILE NKOMO SAID THAT THE CONFERENCE COULD NOT MOVE ONTO OTHER ISSUES UNTIL THIS PROBLEM WAS RESOLVED.

10. COMMENT: THE NOVEMBER 9 MEETINGS REINFORCED THE BRITISH DELEGATION'S CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM THAT THE SOLUTION TO THE INDEPENDENCE DATE PROBLEM WILL BE REACHED BY THE END OF THE WEEK. ABRANS
UNQTE. KISSINGER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, INDEPENDENCE, INTERIM GOVERNMENT, CAT-C, MEETING DELEGATIONS, PROGRESS REPORTS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 NOV 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MartinML
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976STATE276752
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: MLGARRISON:WLK
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Film Number: N760008-0203
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 2
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761161/aaaacatp.tel
Line Count: 184
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: NODIS, ONLY
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS, ONLY
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MartinML
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 12 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <12 MAY 2004 by woolfhd>; APPROVED <08 SEP 2004 by MartinML>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: LOCK1
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RHODESIA CONFERENCE: PROGRESS TOWARDS SETTLING THE INDEPENDENCE DATE FOR SCHAUFELD FROM WISNER
TAGS: PFOR, PDEV, RH, UK, (DUFF, ANTHONY)
To: LONDON USUN NEW YORK
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006